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EARLIEST CATHOLIC ACTIVITIES IN TEXAS

BY

CARLOS E. CASTAÑEDA, A. M.

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

Reprint from *The Catholic Historical Review*, Volume XVII, Number 3,  
October, 1931.

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## EARLIEST CATHOLIC ACTIVITIES IN TEXAS\*

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Throughout the sixteenth century it may be said that the strongest urge in the exploration of the vast, unknown regions of New Spain, whether north, south, east, or west, was wealth and glory. Renown and easy fortune was the ruling passion of the stern conquistadors. And yet it must be admitted in all justice that the religious influence, that is, the missionary zeal which burned in the hearts of the sons of Saint Francis and their co-workers to convert the numberless thousands of the New World was ever present as evidenced by the missionaries that accompanied every expedition, and that it became in the end a greater urge than purely material or political aims. But the glowing achievements of Cortés and Pizarro were too recent not to exercise an undue influence in the undertakings of Nuño de Guzmán, Alvarado, de Soto, Coronado, Narvaez, Oñate, and all the rest. It took a whole century to disillusion them. Faith in fabulously rich kingdoms like those of the Aztecs and the Incas died slowly, but surely, as a result of repeated dismal failures and disappointments. By the close of the century the material interest shifted gradually from rich native kingdoms to rich mines, while the earnest desire to convert the natives grew ever stronger. The cautious viceroy, Count of Monterey, wrote the king in a matter-of-fact report that the exaggerated claims concerning the wealth of Nuevo Mexico and the extraordinary fertility of its soil were to be taken with a grain of salt:

It is evident that there are lands and pastures suitable for agriculture and cattle raising, and that the land is not as sterile as the people who abandoned it paint it; nor is it as rich as others would make it out and as the Governor described it in the *relaciones* of the year 1599. . . . Ordinarily the greater part of the land is more sterile than fertile. . . . It is likewise evident that there is a considerable number of Indians, gentle

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and docile, and greatly inclined, in so far as concerns their manners to our religion, from which much may be expected of their conversion. . . . For this reason it is a very pious cause to make an effort to settle and hold that land.

In summing up the reasons for new efforts and expenditure in the conquest and settlement of this far away land, the viceroy ends by stressing the religious motive as the most worthy.<sup>1</sup>

In proportion as the lure of easy fortunes and fabulous wealth waned, the desire to spread the faith and to bring the numberless natives who roamed the unexplored regions into the fold of the Church, grew with the establishment of new missions and *Colegios de Propaganda Fide* such as the Holy Cross of Querétaro and Our Lady of Guadalupe of Zacatecas, destined to carry our faith and the teachings of the Gospel to the remotest confines of Texas. The conquest of the northern part of New Spain, particularly Nuevo León, Coahuila, Texas, and New Mexico was as much the result of true missionary zeal as of love for adventure, glory, and wealth. "The vast enterprise of the conquest," declares a Mexican historian, "should be considered more as the result of the religious spirit of the missionaries than of brute force exercised by those who, sword in hand, proclaimed the rights of Spain."<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth century the missionary spirit and zeal, the desire to spread our faith and to carry the comforts of religion to the unfortunate natives was a factor as strong, if not stronger, in many instances in the exploration of the northern provinces of New Spain, as the desire for gain or the fear of foreign aggression. That the last two were present is undeniable, but that the missionary zeal had become an all-consuming passion which at times utilized the other two in order to secure action is equally true.<sup>3</sup> Northern New Spain, therefore, owes much to the missionaries.

<sup>1</sup> "Discurso y proposicion que se hace á V. M. de lo tocante a los descubrimientos del Nuevo Méjico" in Fernandez Duro, *Don Diego de Peñalosa y su descubrimiento del Reino de Quivira* (Madrid, 1882), 13-27.

<sup>2</sup> Portillo, Esteban L., *Apuntes para la historia de Coahuila y Tejas* (Saltillo, 1886), 158.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-115; León, Alonso de, *Historia de Nuevo León*, published as Vol. XXV, of the *Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de Mexico*

If the intrepidity and valor of the Spanish settler in penetrating unknown regions and daring imminent dangers and hardships is laudable and worthy of admiration, the zeal of the evangelical missionaries who, without other arms than a crucifix and a breviary, defied death in the hope of finding at each step the palm of martyrdom is no less admirable.<sup>4</sup>

The advance into present day Texas was slow and unspectacular. Though the driving force that first directed the steps of the explorers was in the beginning the traditional myths of fabulous kingdoms like the Gran Quivira, where "everyone had ordinary dishes made of wrought plate and the jugs and bowls were of gold,"<sup>5</sup> or the hills of the Aijados where gold was so plentiful that the natives "not knowing any of the other metals make of it everything they need, such as vessels and the tips of arrows and lances,"<sup>6</sup> or the Cerro de Plata of which Alonso de León says "a hill they say there is called the silver hill, unknown to those living today and, perhaps, to those of the past. It is found to the north [of the Rio Grande]"<sup>7</sup>

A new force soon came into being that was destined to be the determining factor. This was the beautiful tradition of the miraculous visitations that Mother María de Agreda made to the country of the Jumanos and other tribes to the east from about 1626 to 1631, as a result of which the prince or chieftain of this tribe and many Indians were ultimately converted and baptized. It is said that during these years the devout servant of the Lord made frequent visits to this region and instructed the natives in the fundamentals of our faith, preaching to them the love of our Saviour.<sup>8</sup> She commanded them to send for missionaries. Indians complied with her request and we find them taking an unprecedented step in the history of the conquest by sending messengers

(Mexico, 1909), 214 *passim*; Bolton, Herbert E., *Spanish Explorations in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York, 1916), 283-290.

<sup>4</sup> Portillo, *op. cit.*, 131.

<sup>5</sup> Castañeda, *Narrative*, translated by Winship in *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, I, 493.

<sup>6</sup> *Documentos para la historia de Mexico*, 3rd series, 92.

<sup>7</sup> León, *Historia de Nuevo León*, 84.

<sup>8</sup> Mange, Juan Matheos, *Luz de tierra incognita en la America Septentrional*, issued as one of the *Publicaciones* of the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico, 1926, X, 185-201.

to the Spanish settlements to ask the missionaries to come and teach them and give them the sacrament of baptism. Repeatedly the Indians from the Jumano country and the tribes to the east of them sent messengers during the seventeenth century to Saltillo, Paso del Norte, Sante Fe, Parral, and even far away Guadalajara to beseech the *Padres* to come and minister to them.<sup>9</sup>

But where was the land of the Jumanos? The country of the Jumanos was located about two hundred leagues southeast from Santa Fe, on a stream which the early explorers called "Nueces", and which was in all probability either one of the upper branches of the present Colorado or the Concho.<sup>10</sup> Somewhat to the south and east of the Jumanos is where they thought the Tejas nation was located. Posadas, the first to give a detailed description of the Tejas, says:

this nation of the Tejas runs from south to north the entire distance between the Rio del Norte and the Rio de las Nueces [*Colorado*] which must be about 100 leagues. Its width must be as much from east to west. From the limits of this nation to the coast and the Gulf of Mexico there must be about fifty leagues more to the east. This said fifty leagues are occupied by wandering Indians who neither sow nor harvest. . . . On the north this nation is bound by the Quiviras.<sup>11</sup>

As to the people of this kingdom the Bishop of Guadalajara said in a report:

The people of that nation, which they call Texas, and who, they maintain, live under an organized government, congregate in their pueblos, and are governed by a cacique who is named the Great Lord, as they call the one who rules them all, and who, they say, resides in the interior. They have houses made of wood, cultivate the soil, plant maize and other crops, wear clothes and punish misdemeanors, especially theft. The Coahuiles do not give more detailed reports of the Texas because, they say, they are allowed to go only to the first pueblos of the border, since the Great Lord of the Texas does not permit foreign nations to enter the

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<sup>9</sup> Fernández Duro, *Peñalosa*, 13, 48, 57; Benavides, *Memorial y relación*, in *Land of Sunshine*, 139-140; Portillo, *Apuntes*, 105 *et passim*.

<sup>10</sup> Bolton, H. E., "The Jumano Indians in Texas," in the *Quarterly* of the Southwestern Historical Association, XV, 68-74; Posadas, "Informe", in Fernandez Duro, *Peñalosa*.

<sup>11</sup> Posadas, "Informe", in Fernandez Duro, *Peñalosa*, 57-58.



interior of his country. There are many of these Coahuile who give the reports, and who say that they got them through having aided the Texas in their wars against the Pauti, another very warlike nation. The Coahuiles once pacified, the Spaniards can reach the land of the Texas without touching the country of enemies.<sup>12</sup>

Such was the land and the people chosen, as it seems, through the miraculous intervention of Mother María de Agreda<sup>13</sup> for the field of missionary endeavor in northern New Spain. Mange writes:

On one occasion, while praying for the welfare of these souls [*the Indians of Texas*] the Lord took her while in ecstatic contemplation, without her being aware of the means, and it seemed to her that she found herself in a different place and clime, among a people whose nature and disposition had been made known to her in an abstract manner. They were Indians, and it seemed to her that she saw them with her material senses and felt the difference of the clime of the land. While in this condition the Lord commanded her to speak and, preaching to them of her faith, it seemed to her that she was actually doing it in her own language, Spanish, and that the Indians understood her as if she were speaking in theirs; and that though the Indians spoke in their own tongue she understood them with all clearness. She preached to them with marvelous unction and instructed them in our religion. After the ecstasy was over she found herself in the same place where she had been when she first lost her consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to the apparition of "the woman in blue", as Mother María de Agreda was referred to by the Indians, they were visited

<sup>12</sup> Bolton, H. E., "Spanish Occupation of Texas, 1519-1690", in *Quarterly* of the Southwestern Historical Association, XVI.

<sup>13</sup> María de Jesús de Agreda was the daughter of Francisco Coronel and Catarina de Arana, both residents of the villa de Agreda in Spain, on the border between Castilla and Aragon. She was born on April 2, 1602. She professed on January 2, 1620, and throughout her life was noted for her great piety, her excessive penance, and her deep devotion. She wrote a number of books, best known of which is her *Ciudad de Dios*. She was subject to fits of ecstasy, during which she remained unconscious and as if dead for several hours. It was during one of these trances that she was transported spiritually to the wilds of Texas. She is said to have made as many as 500 visits to the Indians, the last one having been in 1631. Mange, *Luz de tierra incognita*, 183-201; Benavides, *Memorial*; Vetancourt, *Chronica de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio*, 1697, 96.

<sup>14</sup> Mange, *Luz de tierra incognita*, 192-93.

by the Spaniards on various occasions, one of the earliest being during the expedition of Don Gaspar Castaño de Sosa, lieutenant-governor of the Nuevo Reino de León. On July 27, 1590, he set out from the Villa del Almaden<sup>15</sup> with a number of soldiers and a train of *carretas* (carts) in search of mines. The expedition followed an easterly direction, crossed the Rio Bravo or del Norte at a place near present Eagle Pass, and explored the region about Las Lajas and as far as the Salado. They found no mines or great wealth and returned after spending more than six months beyond the Rio Grande. It is to be noted that no religious accompanied this expedition and that the Jumanos, if visited, could not have learned much of our religion from this expedition.<sup>16</sup>

In 1695, while in search of the Gran Quivira Juan de Humaña and a party of soldiers were murdered at La Matanza, about 200 miles northeast of Santa Fé. Six years later, in 1601, Juan de Oñate was led by one of the survivors of the massacre to La Matanza. There were eighty men in the expedition and two friars. Many furs and skins of Cibolo were brought back and interest in trade was created, but little else was accomplished.<sup>17</sup> It seems that in 1606, Juan Oñate again undertook an expedition in search of the Gran Quivira and went three hundred miles to the east. He describes the plains of Cibola and how with the help of the Aijados (a supposed Texas tribe) entered the kingdom of Quivira but was forced to abandon its conquest because of the small number of his followers and the hostile character of the Quiviras.<sup>18</sup>

But our interest is in the Jumanos and the Tejas. The first recorded journey to the former is that of Father Juan de Salas, who in 1629 made a visit to them in compliance with the request received while engaged in missionary work among the Indians

<sup>15</sup> Almaden was first founded in 1590 but was abandoned and refounded on three different occasions. It is more or less on the site of present Monclova. It was from there that the Bosque-Larios expedition set out in 1675 for Texas. León, *Historia de Nuevo León*.

<sup>16</sup> For a complete account, day by day, of this expedition see *Colección de documentos inéditos de Indias*, IV, 283-354.

<sup>17</sup> Posadas, "Informe."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

settled in the vicinity of Albuquerque.<sup>19</sup> The delegation sent to Father Salas was the first to relate the story of the miraculous apparitions of Mother María de Agreda among their people and her command to call missionaries to instruct them in the faith. The date coincides with the original accounts of her visitations.<sup>20</sup> Father Salas set out with three soldiers and Fray Diego López and traveled about one hundred miles east of Santa Fé till he came upon a multitude of Indians. While among them he received messengers from the Aijados and the Quiviras asking him to come to their country and instruct them in our religion. He lost no time in returning to Santa Fé to solicit aid to establish missions among these people who were so anxious to be congregated in pueblos the better to receive instruction.<sup>21</sup>

In 1632, Father Salas, accompanied by Fray Diego de Ortega again set out for the Jumano country. They took a few soldiers with them for protection and soon reached their destination, from where after a short stay Father Salas returned to New Mexico, leaving Fray Diego de Ortega among the Jumanos. Fray Ortega stayed with them for six months and visited the country as far as the Nueces (Colorado).<sup>22</sup>

In 1634, Alonso de Vaca left Santa Fé in search of the Gran Quivira and following an easterly course for three hundred miles reached the "Rio Grande," meaning the Mississippi, where he was told by his Indian allies the kingdom of Gran Quivira began. He did not cross the river, however, feeling that his force was not strong enough. In the account of his journey he says, "on the banks of the Rio Grande del Norte begins the nation called Tejas", thus confirming the general idea held at that time as to the location of these Indians.<sup>23</sup>

It was not until 1650 that definite and concrete knowledge concerning the Texas Indians was at last obtained. In that year

<sup>19</sup> Benavides, *Memorial*, 1630; Hodge, "The Jumano Indians," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, April, 1910.

<sup>20</sup> Mange, *Luz de tierra incognita*, 183-201; Benavides, *Memorial*, 1630; Vetancourt, *Chronica*, 96.

<sup>21</sup> Benavides, *Memorial*, 1630; Vetancourt, *Chronica*.

<sup>22</sup> Posadas, "Informe."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Captain Hernan Martin and Captain Diego del Castillo with other soldiers and some Christian Indians set out from the villa de Santa Fé with orders from General Hernando de la Concha, Governor at the time of the province of New Mexico, and after traveling about two hundred leagues in a different direction [*from that followed by de Vaca?*], they arrived at this site of the Rio de las Nueces [*Colorado*] and the nation of the Jumanos, where they remained for six months, both because of the friendliness of the Indians and the abundance of provisions. During the six months they remained there, they took from the river a quantity of oysters that when burned left a few pearls which, if not of extra fine quality because of being taken from fresh water, still were pearls. The said captains explored the river down stream in an easterly and southerly direction into the land of the Indians called Cuitaos, Escanjaques and Aijados, and after traveling about fifty leagues, they came upon the limits of the nation called Tejas which they did not enter because they realized its vast extent and its many peoples.<sup>24</sup>

Upon their return to Santa Fé they showed the pearls gathered to the governor, who immediately dispatched them to Mexico City by Fray Antonio de Aranda. The pearls created considerable interest in the land just visited and orders were consequently issued for a new expedition, which set out from Santa Fé in 1654, under Diego de Guadalajara, who accompanied by thirty soldiers and two hundred Indian allies made his way to the Jumano country again. He dispatched Andrés López with twelve men and some Christians ahead to ascertain the disposition of the Cuitaos. The small party encountered the enemy about thirty leagues beyond and had a hard fight, in which they took two hundred prisoners as well as many deer and buffalo skins.<sup>25</sup>

The significance of these two expeditions in which no missionaries took part, the only religious element being the Christian Indians taken as guides and interpreters, is the knowledge which was gained of the Jumano country and of the Texas Indians and their neighbors, all of which was useful in the subsequent efforts of the missionaries to enter this territory. Even the sordid passion for material gain and fortune was utilized by the missionaries to arouse interest in taking possession of the land they had so long desired to enter. Thus the religious zeal and fervor did not disdain to use the lure of mythical wealth to secure the ma-

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

terial help and support necessary to bring into the fold of the Church the numberless natives that roamed the boundless plains of Texas.

The approaches to Texas so far discussed are mainly from New Mexico as a base. The first man to cross into Texas territory in the lower Rio Grande was Fernando de Azcué, *Alcalde Mayor* of the villa de Saltillo, who in 1665 set out to chastise the Indians. For some time the frontier settlements of New Spain had been suffering from the incursions of the Indians who, not content with plundering the outposts such as Monclova, Cerralvo, and Monterey, carried their depredations as far inland as Chihuahua. It was agreed, therefore, to organize an expedition with troops from both Monterey and Saltillo. This was placed under the command of Azcué, who set out with one hundred and three soldiers, eight hundred horses, and seventy *cargas* (cartloads) of provisions. The expedition was joined on its way to the Rio Grande by three hundred Bobole Indians under Nicolás el Carretero. The interpreter was Ambrosio Cepeda, an Indian who had the reputation of knowing all the dialects used by the different tribes in the section of the country they were to visit. After six days' journey they were about twenty-four leagues beyond the Rio Grande, still searching for the Cataxtle Indians. Here they met the enemy, who took refuge in a small thicket, where they held the Spanish force at bay during the whole day. After the "big fight", as the engagement was called, it was found that one hundred enemy Indians were killed and seventy prisoners, young and old, taken. The Spaniards had twenty-two wounded. During the engagement an old Indian woman had encouraged the Cataxtles to fight by playing on a flute. After the battle the Indian allies asked the Spanish captain to turn the old woman over to them for a feast they wished to hold that night. "The petition was refused, but they having learned that a young boy among the captives was a relative of hers, took possession of him secretly that night, and, without anybody knowing about it, they ate him, a thing which could not be avoided," adds the chronicler, and the reader can judge of the state of affairs even among the allies.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> León, *Historia de Nuevo León*, 228-230.

Real missionary work among the Tejas Indians, however, may be said to begin with the work of Fr. Juan de Larios. "The pioneers in this advance were the missionaries,"<sup>27</sup> declares Bolton; and it may be added that the first of these pioneers was Father Larios, a Franciscan friar of the province of Santiago de Jalisco, who was the first to carry his missionary endeavors beyond the lower Rio Grande.<sup>28</sup> It was while on his way from Atoyac to Durango that Father Larios was much surprised at the end of his second day's journey to find himself suddenly surrounded by a host of Indians. The good friar thought his hour had come and prepared to die, but greater still was his surprise to find that the Indians instead of falling upon him with their arms, came up to him and devoutly kissed his garments and asked his blessing. After a conversation in the conventional sign language, there being no interpreter, Father Larios was given to understand that they were friendly Indians who desired him to accompany them to their land to teach and baptize them. He in turn told them that he would be glad to go with them but that he had to send word to his provincial to inform him of the reasons for not going to Durango. Word was consequently sent to Fr. Juan Mohedano, the provincial at Guadalajara, and Father Larios went on with the Indians to their country.

The first word he heard as he entered the new lands was "Coahuila", a name which he gave to the first mission he found there and which it is said to mean *flying serpent*. In entering the land, Father Larios observed that he had traveled to the northeast. He remained among his friends for three years and did not return to Guadalajara until 1673.<sup>29</sup>

He soon returned to his beloved flock, bringing back with him three other missionaries; Fr. Esteban Martínez, Fr. Manuel de la

<sup>27</sup> Bolton, *Spanish Explorations in the Southwest 1542-1706*, 284.

<sup>28</sup> Frejes, Fr. Francisco, *Historia breve de la conquista de los estados independientes*, 208-215; Portillo, *Apuntes para la historia de Coahuila y Tejas*, (Saltillo, 1886) 140-142; Mota Padilla, *Conquista del reino de la Nueva Galicia en la America Septentrional*, 379-386.

<sup>29</sup> For the full account of the story of Father Larios' first visit to Coahuila and the Rio Grande country see any of the references cited in note 28.



Cruz, and Fr. Juan Barrero. With the aid of Captain Elisondo he founded a mission on the Sabine river (in Coahuila) and one to the north of this river.<sup>30</sup> In one of his expeditions it is said that Father Manuel de la Cruz crossed the Rio Grande, where he came in contact with the three Texas tribes.<sup>31</sup>

Indian hostilities all along the frontier had increased during the latter years in spite of the missionary efforts of Father Larios and his companions and it was decided that Coahuila be formally settled as a measure of defense and protection. The conquest of this province had been up to this time spiritual, it was now to become material as well. On May 11, 1674, the Audiencia of Guadalajara formally appointed Antonio Balcárcel Riva de Neira Sotomayor, *Alcalde Mayor* of the province of Coahuila, the latter having agreed to enter the said province and undertake its settlement at his own cost.<sup>32</sup> The new settlers were enjoined to avoid friction with the natives "who with so much love appear to have embraced our holy Catholic faith through the efforts of our missionaries who from this province have been sent to work for their conversion."<sup>33</sup>

The new governor lost no time in carrying out his contract and by November 23, 1674, less than six months after his appointment, he had established the new town of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe on the former villa de Almaden, thrice abandoned. Here with the help of Father Larios and his companions two different settlements or missions were established, where the various Indians were congregated. Desirous of cutting the principal evil at the root, he decided upon an expedition into the Indian country beyond Guadalupe for the purpose of making peace with them and of learning more about them.<sup>34</sup>

To lead the expedition he chose Fernando del Bosque, who, in company with Father Larios and Father Dionisio de San Buena-

<sup>30</sup> Frejes, *Historia Breve de la Conquista*, 208-218; Portillo, *Apuntes para la historia*, 140-142.

<sup>31</sup> Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706*, 285; Portillo, *Apuntes para la historia*, 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> Portillo, *Apuntes para la historia*, 45.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-100.

ventura and a number of troops, were to go as far as the Dacate mountains and visit such other places as he might deem advisable for the better service of His Majesty. He was also to visit all places to which he was invited by the natives. The Indians were to be congregated in towns and settled in order that they might more easily receive instruction from the missionaries concerning our holy faith. He was to bring back a full and complete description of the rivers, their location, the character of the country, and the nature of its mountains; to take royal possession of each and every place visited and draw up the corresponding *auto* or testimony in due form; and to make a full report of the number of the various tribes or nations encountered, including all the men and women, young and old.<sup>35</sup> The significance of the expedition is clear. It is the first well authenticated missionary undertaking to cross the Rio Grande and make a reliable report on conditions beyond it in the region below the Pecos. Formal missionary activities in Texas may be said to date from the *entrada* of Fernando del Bosque and Father Juan Larios.

It would take too long to give all the details of this expedition, the diary of which is available in printed form in English.<sup>36</sup> Only a brief summary of the more significant incidents will be related.

The expedition set out from Guadalupe on April 30, 1675. It consisted of Fernando del Bosque, Fr. Juan Larios, Fr. Dionisio de San Buenaventura, ten Spanish soldiers, Lazaro Agustín, the Indian interpreter and governor of the Indian Pueblo of San Miguel de Luna, Juan de la Cruz, of the Bobole nation, an ensign, twenty Boboles, and one hundred Indians armed with bows and arrows of the Queiquesale nation who joined the expedition at the Nadadores river. By the fifth of May the expedition reached the Sabinas River (Coahuila). After formally taking possession of the river which he found "unoccupied and uninhabited", he erected a high cross made of wood and had the Christian doctrine taught to the Indians by the commissary.<sup>37</sup> He named the river San Antonio.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>36</sup> Bolton, *Spanish Explorations in the Southwest, 1542-1706*, 291-309.

<sup>37</sup> For the account of the Bosque-Larios given here, the translation of the



On the eleventh of the same month the expedition appears to have reached the Rio Grande del Norte, which del Bosque named San Buenaventura del Norte. The country and place of crossing they describe as follows:

Having travelled northward apparently about three leagues through plains with much mesquite, and with fine pastures of green grass, I arrived at a copious and very wide river, with a current more than four hundred *varas* across, which the Indians said was called Rio del Norte. I found it unoccupied and uninhabited, with only *rancherías* of Indians, consisting of dwellings of grass huts after their custom. Having passed up stream in search of a ford and not having found one, as it is very deep, the said Indians decided to take us across at a place where the river forms three branches. It was necessary to make a raft of poles to cross the middle one, having forded the first, which is more than two hundred *varas* wide and a *vara* and a half deep, with the water above the stirrup and near the hind bow of the saddle, with a current the whole width, and with willow and osier brush on a little island which is in the middle. On its banks it is very pleasing, and it had many fish, such as catfish, *piltontes*, very large turtles, and eels, all of which were caught in my presence, and which, I certify, I took in my hands. I took royal possession of the river and its territory in the name of His Majesty. It runs, apparently, from west to east. And for said settlement and conquest I named it San Buenaventura River; and as evidence of possession I made a legal record and ordered a high wooden cross erected; and religious instruction was given to the Indians by the father chaplain.

This long quotation gives us an idea of the form used in taking possession and of the type of description that was entered in the diary day by day. The information is very full and is of great value, being one of the first descriptions taken on the ground itself. The Rio Grande, according to their account of the leagues travelled, was sixty-one leagues from Guadalupe.

On the fourteenth, about seven leagues from the Rio Grande, they found a watering place "in a plain without any trees except mesquite groves." It was here that they killed and ate their first buffalo. In my presence there were killed, declares del Bosque by said Indians and Spaniards three buffalo bulls and two buffalo cows

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Diary of this expedition in Bolton's *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 291-309, was used exclusively.

for the people to eat. The meat is very savory. The form of the buffalo is very ugly. Although large, they resemble cows and bulls. Their hair is shaggy. The withers are very high, making them appear hump-backed, and their necks are large. The head is short and very shaggy, so that the wool covers the eyes and prevents them from seeing well. The horns are small and thick, but like those of the bull. The hips and haunches are like those of a hog, and the tail is bare except at the end, where there are long bristles. The hoofs are cloven, and at the knees and from there up to the shoulder there is much bristle-like hair, like he-goats. They gaze at the people sidewise like wild hogs, with hair a-bristle. They are of the size of cattle.

On this day we find evidence of the frequency with which some of the Indians that lived beyond the Rio Grande had been in the habit of going to Saltillo. There

appeared Juan, an Indian of the Bibit nation, and chief of it, and said that he was a Christian, having been baptized at the Villa of Saltillo, and another Indian, a heathen, who said he was chief of the Jume nation . . . and having asked them various questions, they said that for a long time they had desired to become Christians, and that some of them having gone to the Villa of Saltillo, had succeeded, but that to the rest it has been impossible because of being distant and unable to take out their people, of which many had died from smallpox without receiving the water of baptism; and that they requested this, and desired to settle in pueblos and be under instruction in the Christian doctrine.

This is typical of almost every one of the places where the expedition visited.

On the fifteenth there is a description of the agreement of several chiefs with all their followers to become Christians and to be congregated in a pueblo. There

appeared the chiefs Xoman, Terrodan, Teaname, and Teimamar, with their people. I had them examined through sworn interpreters who understand their language, Mexican [probably aztec], and Castilian, named Don Lasaro Agustin, governor of the Pueblo of San Miguel de Luna of the city of Guadalupe of this province, and an Indian named Pascual. Various questions having been asked these chiefs, each one separately, they said unanimously and in agreement that they were heathen; that in their lives they [*never*] had seen Spaniards; and had lived as heathen without knowledge that there was a God, or who He was, and without knowledge of the true way to salvation, and in the dark regarding it; that they wished to be Christians and be baptized, with their

children and wives, and to live as such in a pueblo or pueblos . . . and that at once they were rendering and did render obedience to his Majesty the King or lord Don Carlos II; and that they would be friends of the Spaniards. Thereupon they shouted *Viva, viva, viva, the king our lord.*

After having administered the oath of allegiance to them in the name of the king:

At once their people approached, and both men and women devotedly kissed the sleeves of the habits of the fathers, the commissary, Fray Juan Larios, and chaplain Fray Dionisio de San Buenaventura; and they asked permission to give them as alms something of what they possessed, as a mark of gratitude to God for having opened to them the way to the truth. And at once they began throwing things upon the ground, some a piece of tallow, others hides or skins of animals, of the kind with which they clothe themselves or cover themselves, and in which they sleep.

The first authentic report of the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass on Texas soil is found in this Diary. Though the expedition crossed the Rio Grande on the fifth of May, there is no mention of the celebration of Mass until the sixteenth. On this day the party was still at a place which they called San Ysidro and which must have been on one of the branches of the Nueces river, called by the Indians Ona:

I, said lieutenant *Alcalde mayor*, certify that this day there was erected in said post a portable altar, and that it was prepared to say Mass; and at a signal made with a small bell the people came to hear it. It was chanted by the father commissary missionary, Fray Juan de Larios, and was attended by all the people. After it was concluded they asked the said father to baptize them; and when they were given to understand by him through an interpreter that he could not baptize them until they knew their prayers, to console them he baptized fifty-five infants, the Spaniards acting as their godfathers. They were instructed in the doctrine and counted, and the people of the four chiefs named in the preceding *auto* were found to comprise four hundred and twenty-five warriors and seven hundred and forty-seven women, boys, and girls, of all ages, making in all eleven hundred and seventy-two persons.

In the statement made above about this being the first high Mass, the reason why it was not mentioned before was, perhaps, the fact that they did not consider it extraordinary to hold regular low Mass. It is to be noted particularly in the description just

cited concerning the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism that contrary to the grossly unfounded assertion that the missionaries, in their zeal and fervor, often baptized thousands of Indians without giving them adequate instruction to prepare them for the sacrament, Father Larios refused to baptize the grown children and adults "until they knew their prayers."

On the twenty-first, Father Larios ordered an altar erected in order that Father Dionisio de San Buenaventura could say Mass. This service was attended by the Indians of the Ceniocane nation which made a total of one hundred and seventy-eight persons. The *padres* were consistently beseeched to baptize the Indians, but they consistently refused, putting them off by saying that they had to learn their prayers first. The farthest point reached by the expedition was a point which they called San Pablo Hermitaño and which has been located in the present Edwards County. It was on a small arroyo "with heavy timber, between some knolls and high hills (like nipples)." This place they reached on the twenty-fifth of May and after spending four days there they started back on the twenty-ninth, but apparently followed a different route, for they "arrived at another place on the River of San Buenaventura del Norte" where they found part of the Bobole Indians with their women and children. Evidently on the return they crossed the Rio Grande above the former place, as the Bobloe nation was in the habit of ranging farther up north.

On the twelfth of June, del Bosque and his expedition reached Guadalupe, where he made formal report to Don Antonio de Balcarcel Riba de Neira Sotomayor as follows:

Having gone at his orders to reconnoitre the nations of Indians of the following of Don Esteban Gueiquesale, who lived toward the Sierra Dacate and in its vicinity, and the others of their district and neighborhood, they manifested before his Majesty, through me and their messengers, that they wish to settle in pueblos and be Christians, with religious to catechise and instruct them. And having passed through the length and breadth of the country which appears in the records, and having seen it and its inhabitants, I have learned that they are divided into three followings or bands, each very numerous, since the least numerous, although wild and the most bellicose, is that of the following of Don Esteban Gueiquesale, which are the nations counted, excepting the Yoricas,

Jumees, Vivit, and Jeniocanes, who belong with the Boboles, Catujanos, and Tilijaes, of the districts already stated; and of the great discord between them, from which they kill and eat each other and capture each other's children, for they say this, being now actually at war with each other, the band of Don Esteban with that of the Jeniocanes and their allies, and the Yoricas, Jumees, and Vivit with the Arames, Ocanes, and those of their following, and the Boboles with the Yurbipames. These tiers of people are very numerous and their limits or that of one with another is not known, for neither on the north nor on the east is there any report of their terminus.

For this reason these Indians begged me to go to see their rancherías and those of their allies; and they have said that they wished to be Christians, and that all wish it, and to settle in pueblos, and to ask for religious; and they wish that aid be given to each one separately and not together, for it happens that for very slight causes they kill each other, and conditions become bad. I decided, therefore, to return from said post of San Jorge, counting on the way the people of Don Esteban who might be on the road, to inform said *alcalde mayor*, which I now do, both of this as well as that unless for these three bands or followings of people three head settlements be made, in which each shall be regarded as independent of the other—one in the valley of San Antonio and Sabinas River, which will accommodate many settlements, and another at Los Baluartes and San Francisco River, which is of the same sort, and the one which is already made at the city of Guadalupe—it will not be possible to maintain these nations under instruction in the Christian doctrine. For they are people, one extremely barbarous, and the others barbarous, who have shown bad conduct toward the Spaniards and other vassals of his Majesty in La Viscaia, the Kingdom of Leon, and in part of La Galicia, robbing and killing for more than twenty years.

Even less will it be possible for any officer of his Majesty to keep them in order and under instruction unless he has forces for it, although he may have to use much love and blandishment when having to correct them, for since they are vicious people and not habituated to labor to sustain themselves, they will return to their natural habits, and greater damages will result. And there will not be Spaniards who wish to settle in the country, for it is known that those who entered it have left with misgivings or fears which some have been spreading abroad.

The most important post found in which to establish forces is Santa Crus, since it is fourteen leagues from the valley of San Antonio, a little less from Los Baluartes, and twenty from the city of Guadalupe, and in the heart and centre of the country. These forces will not be sufficient if less than seventy men, since it is very remote from settlements and aid, for that of the Villa of Saltillo is more than sixty-eight leagues away,

and the Kingdom of Leon the same, these being the nearest. Likewise, ministers of the gospel are necessary, since these nations ask for them; and they do not wish to have those of one nation attend the others, because they are of different languages, the people numerous, and their homes far apart. There are necessary for the present at least four religious for each group, if his Majesty, God preserve him, is pleased to have it settled and given seed grain, oxen, and some families of Tlaxacaltec Indians.

This report I make to said *alcalde mayor* on the basis of what I have seen and observed, and of my experience of more than twenty years with barbarian natives and others. And in order that it may be on record I set it down as an *auto*, which I signed with the witnesses assisting me, who were Diego Luis Sanches and Ambrosio de Verlanga.

From this time on missionary activity, though it lagged, never died out, until it finally culminated in the permanent establishment of missions first in East Texas and later in and around the Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar. The expedition led by Alonso de León in 1688, so generally believed to have been the beginning of actual missionary work in Texas, was rather a culmination of the efforts of Father Juan Salas, of Father Diego de Ortega, of Father Juan Larios, of Father Dionisio de San Buenaventura and of many others, each of which unostentatiously labored for the praise and glory of God in the remote and unexplored regions of Texas at various times.

CARLOS E. CASTAÑEDA.

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